



NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN
The Voice for Michigan Soldiers and Airmen since 1956

The Honorable Jim Stamas
153 Capitol Building
Lansing, Michigan 48933

May 5, 2014

Re: House Bill 5451

Dear Chairman Stamas:

The National Guard Association of Michigan (NGAM) is writing to express its support of House Bill (HB) 5451. As you know HB 5451 puts in statue the Michigan National Guard Tuition Assistance program which is in the Governor's budget proposal. We are supporting Representative Rendon's bill (HB 5451) for the reasons listed below.

1. Our Guard members are in need of financial assistance in order to attend Michigan colleges and universities.
2. Currently, National Guard members must serve on active duty to be eligible for the full federal tuition assistance stipend. Additionally, new recruits are not able to draw federal tuition benefits until they complete their Advanced Initial Training (AIT). Depending on availability of school seats and length of AIT, new recruits may have to wait one to two years to draw federal tuition assistance. This tuition assistance program will bridge this gap.
3. Our neighboring states all have tuition assistance programs and in some cases are drawing Michiganders away to serve in their state National Guard.
4. Educational Assistance is a vital tool to attract new recruits and retain current members. The potential of a restored and fully funded Michigan National Guard Tuition Assistance Program has already helped increase recruitment in 2014 by 50%.
5. If the tuition assistance program is approved, the Guard plans to publicize this program during the summer of 2014 in preparation for the 2015 school year. We know there will be a significant number of National Guard members anticipating use of this program.

By fully supporting the tuition assistance program, I believe you will help retain highly skilled and experienced members in the Michigan National Guard as well as strengthen the future of the Guard. Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued support.

Respectfully,

VALDE GARCIA
State Senator (Ret.)
Director of Corporate and Government Affairs

cc: State Representative Bruce Rendon